



Workforce Services

Office of Child Care

Wednesday, September 09, 2026

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Office of Child Care Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

Location: Department of Workforce Services
720 South 200 East
SLC, UT 84111
Conference Room 100

The following link will take you to the power point which was shared throughout the meeting which may be helpful while reading through the minutes: <https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1485583.pdf>

Link to the agenda:

<https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1485069.pdf>

Link to the audio recording:

<https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1486605.mp4>

Committee: Ben Trentleman, Holly Kingston, Teresa Judd, Joyce Hasting, Kelly Noorda, Rhonda Dossett, Bree Murphy, Crystal Knippers (for Florencia Schapira De Grout), Missy Sparks, Katie Ricord, Kristen Schulz, Liliam Llanos, Jody Zabriskie, Shauna Tiatia and Anna Robbins-Ek

Excused/Absent: Florencia Schapira De Grout, Jennifer Floyd and Johnny Anderson

Interested Parties and Guests: Heather Thomas, Camie Galt, Kari Haugsoen, Jamie Foster, Emma Moench, Ann Stockham Mejia, JoEllen Robbins, Cristine Flores, Kui V., A.M., Mythlie Criab, Jeremy D., Su Chon, Monica Gailey, Christina Robles, Melea Rogers, Heidi Preator, Elenor Kesler, Kayla Valdez, Xiomara Tolentino, Tristan Robles, Karina Palestina, Ross Kesler, Erick Robles, Jake Fitisemanu, Anuar Curel, Nabor Palestina, Blanca Murillo, Kamila Jacobo Palestina, Azteca Druce Valerio-Bedolla, Kory Holdaway, Victoria Salazar, Carlos Palestina, Bonnie Kingston, Micah Kingston, Araueni Olivares, Heather Peterson, Alexa Salazar, Serjio Velasco, Noemi Palestina, Colleen Miller, Jared Mendenhall, Mallory Adams, (cazaresyovy237), Jaclyn Rock, Erika Roman, Learning Tree (East Front Desk), Delayla Alvarado, Kailey Christensen, Christine Whitaker, Sara S, Kassidy Webster, Maia London, Pedro Izaguirre, Shamika Roskelley, Geoff Mcgee, Cyprianna Openshaw, Malia Tuuhoko, Brittany (dentfam.us), Dania Medrano, Rayvin Hatch, Eleanor (looneybird1423), Marie Wende, Johana Altez, Hannah Malone, Alyse Crane, Kara Eddington, Ashley Nicholes, Irene Ortiz, Carrie Valencia, Peach Washburn, Jailien Marquez, Jodi Steere, Shunea (12), Rosemary (Learning Ladder), Bailey T Roset, Dorthy Garcia, Krystal Nielsen, Bryan H (Kiddie Academy), Venus (shy1019), hopeidaycare933, Alex Strong, Patricia Rivera, Chalayne Betsuie, Fidelia Bayiloukoulou, Kendra Wheeler, Shan (My Kidz Rock), Gina Razo, Johana Mejia, Aalyah Bell, Erika Evenson, Brooke Hendriksen, Robert Englert, Tania Granados, Carolyn (Carolyn915), Kimberlie Rock, Jared Lisonbee, Jamie Bitton, Evelia Santos, Brenda Sonoda, Samantha Mafua, Brittany Zoltz, Brandon Dean, Sasha Thais, Astrid Arias, Lisa Valdez, Sabrina (ABC Great Beginnings), Paloma (Lupitaromero), Marlene Pop, Maelee, Mechelle Larson, Mayra Ceja, Beth Glenn, utahvotesforsara, Ainsley (d08), Martha Martinez, Liz Barlow, Rachel (Let Them be Kids), Velanne (33), Briana (msbrianalal), Kestra Hart, Maria Tapia, Vivian Lucia Monclova Orozco, Quinn Canick, Kaitlyn Norwood, Dana Pevey, Sonia Batalla, Sofia Garay, Ladonna Raye, Andrea (Garcia Norma Childcare), Norma L Vazquez, Alysia Burrows, Yolanda Magana, Aspynn McClain, Mary Gilson, Jess Shaffer, Mary (151.mk), Jason (Demonjay2002), Samantha Garrett, Gina Bosworth-Holdaway, Allison Keller, Paige Giles, Jayden Scothern, Ellie Filimoehala, Daniele (dssoftball07), Vigil, Suki Trujillo, Sasha, Anamaria Medina, Cheryl Nelson, Kristin Karns, Amy Moyes, Esmeralda Moeno, Miriam Xoxotla-Perez, Dawn Haley, Martha (margarang1779), Brielle Littleford, Hailee Matthews, Gabriela Parrales, Keri Meerbergen, Emireth Ponce, Adrienne Thomas, Natanni, Lexi (lexiblack08), Corina Fuentes, Mara (8amonterog89), Michelle Kimball Curtis,

Viviana Gisseld, Naomi Palestina, Kassidy Adams, Stacie (robbieandstacie), Jefferson Curtis, Julie Warehime, S Price, Hannah Garrett, Gabby Hernandez, Dalia Miranda, Alexis G Howe, Brinca (mirandabricia), Taylor Christofferson Taylor, Alyssa Sallee, Katelyn Vanderkooi, Deanna Fratellone, Rosa Casimiro, Ana Ruiz, Rebecca Hargrove, Lillian Bowles, Elsa Trujillo, Joan Schroeder, Melanie Call, Lewis B (Lewisb89), Mary Anne Erickson, Kelly Carlson, Erica Beckstrom, Luis Cabera, Helena Taylor, Jordan Brasher, Braxton Lethco, Shauna Brown, Chris Kynaston, Mary Klotzbier, Taleasha Hart, Kortney Rushton, Janelle (janellemhole), Celina Messersmith, Elisavel Garcia, Amy Stetler, Maria Chavez, Abbie Warg, Ryder Henley, Lauren Taylorsville, Sara Petersen, Erika Pacheco, Victoria Ortega, Catherine Price, Kelly Gutierrezito, Kellie Matis, Mariah Murphy, Donna Healy, Kait Reminder, Eleyda Hernandez-, Magie Domis, Morning Lovelyday, Stephanie Wyler, Robyn Linscomb, Makenna Spillettmak, Victoria Spillettmak, Erin, Jasmine Ririe, Susan (slg324), Emma Bradfield, Kdance66, Anthony Loubet, Garret Richards, Carolyn Christensen, Sandra Hughes, Lara Kingston, Shailee Bettis, Michele Rice, Cami Morrell Coy, Naysla Anderson, Andrea Grabowski, Paula Mercado, Sara Bullion, Tehya Favors, Ashlie Poulsfam, Jp (jana.gogo99), Leah Schilling, Sarah Hoyt, Keelie Bunderson, Orem (jzman), Jamie Allen, Stacie (Learning Time Academy), Shae (sec05b), LaVeryl P, Zachary Bullion, Heidi (heidilsi), Maria Guadalupe, Sadie Larsen, Ashley Hebert, Heidi Lee Barker, Chelsea Dalton, Becca Figgins, Victoria Hair, Pam Adams, Teresa Larsen, Jessica L Nixon, Kalie (My Kids Connection), Bruna (Little Seed ECC), Betzy Mulwee, Donna (donnaabug), Calypso, Jeaniene Fower, Denise (bryenac), Fox 13 News Utah, Carolina Carovalle, Charlotte Tanner, Emily Petersen, Heather Fiack, Linda Sego, Panda Child Care 3, Jennifer Richins, Madison Coy, Nora Alicia Rodriguez Magana, Courtney Curtis, Amanda Volden, Valerie Barton, Dalton Brown, Misti Warhurst, Alan Seamons, Kyra Mcdonald, Becca (My Kids Connection), Niki (Little Critters SLC), Anastasia Skippere, Laralynn Clark, Carrie Stott, Noelle Bradford, V S Barton, Tanessa King, Amy Sperandeo, Mafer Salgado, Allison S Prague, Ely Robles, Kelsi Tuitavuki, Valarie Browning, Elenor (looneybird1423), Haylee Showell, Dae Arevalo, Tanya Becraft, Karrie Phillips, Cindi Buckley, Stephanie Smith, Verlina Adame, Rita Arballorita, Scotty Jo, Reilly Sherrell, Sonny Martinez, Broc Huntsman, Ann (ann84119), Southwest Learning Treee, Maria Lopez, Paula Mills, Charles Fuller, Mayela Mendez, Olivias Smith, Sifa Mushegera, Catherine Ruetschlin, Brian Zabriskie, Iris Sanchez, Amber Mabey, Ryan Coy, Mariya Padlla, Rosendo Robles, Trina Valdez, Ed (eeimagine48), Daniel Severo, Pamela Latamondeer, R Larsen (rlarsen1579), Rebecca C (Willburzz), Chelsea (Chelsea8574), Paola Armendariz, Michelle (ring34), Yessie Atilano, Heather Hughes, Joe Edman, Tristen Robles, Velinda Lemus, Mary Kavanaugh, Dani Perez, Ashley Martinez Ramos, Juliet Moyes, Christy Petersen, Hope Henrie, Connie Fowler, Tenille Taggart, Janie Mcbee, Jay Chaze, Sue Womack, Jessica Ririe, KUTV News, Courtney Jung, Tami Thomas, Andrea Owen, Meg Rober, Nancy Jimenez, Derek Sego, Natalie Meadows, Nancy Rodriguez, Citlali Morales, Clark Peterson, Amanda McStotts, Rhonelsy Silvera, Alison May, Jessica (ku18), Tracy (tashiotani), Sharon Timothy Miller, Jeff Sorensen, Robin (presx), Sarah Streeper, Ann (anndee_k), Katie Mclaws, David Jacobs, Lindsey Miller, Carissa Time For Families, Xiomara (Bright Steppers), Kathleen Brown, Tiffany Sunshine Academy, Nichole Gaffney, Jennifer Stout (815), Tina Carter, Allison Mitton, Dacie Derbidge, Suzanne Walsh, Anyely Hernandez, Benyde Walker, Jennifer Stout, Mindy Fabrizio, Brighter Steps (two), Todd Barnhouse, Vanessa Lowe, Jerica Casper, Deborah Kingston, Erika Fuentes, Patricia Garay, Angie Atkinson, Maydoli (Discovery Kids Sandy), Yessi Oliva, Annie Winters, Marjie, Andrew Darowski, Kalie (31), Eesha (Alysheahz), Jamie Meifu, Bethany Hosking, Jada R (jadap1599), Wendy M, Sophia Severo, Miriam Grijalva, Staci Fuller, Maydoli Menendez, Tonya Edwards, Charlene (charlenengalula), Saira (cazaresyovy237), Shelly Bailey, Michaela Jean, Hillary Christensen, Morgan (morgandawngolightly), Sarah Wilkins, Carolyn Turner, Tracy Miller, Carla Tiny Humans ii, Cynthia Gomez, Jenni Duenas, Brittany Greenwood, Rose (execror.barneline90), Janna Thompson, Leilani Mataele, Mel Discovery Centers, Leslie Hjorth, Liz Oates, Amanda (mandabre), Amy (gettingroggywinit), Brandy Gonzales, Tressa Johnson, Kynlee Campbell, (to.ganrockstar), Rob Walker, Candace (candycaine620), Sandra Sarmiento, Kenzie (kenziandcolter), Sam Garrett, Heather Pray Nehring, Hannah Barber, Rylee Cefalo, Brytin Waterlyn Ayers, Silvia Catten, Lisa Roman, Leah Hansen, PCC (a02362310), Nicole Rojas, Kristy Degraaf, Avery (luvampires), Nelly Hedberg, Cheryl Hone, Preston Phillips, Emily Buss, Leticia DeHerrera, Tiana Mondragon, Summer (summerrayn02), Ashley Sudbury, Becca My Kids Connect, Ali Gillins, Kelli Collins, Joyce L. Winder, Heather Medina, Connie Mccullough, Yuvineh Guzman, Jessica Gardner, Anna Clements, Elizabeth Kingston, JoAnne Here We Grow Draper, Broc (brocoltz), Rose Mary Oxley, Aubrey Lott, Alexd Moyes, Yatzari Miranda, Kammie (mckammenrogers), Odarly Florez, Erick (eeimagine2), Joey Degraaf, Marcus Shiotani, Rachel Gallegos, Brittany (oakleyclean22), Whitney Kaidens, Yunliang Bao, Pdougie (pjdoug), Taylor Stetler, Emily Barnson, Tiffanie Padelsky, Nayreth Montiel, Noura Khanchouche, Estela Mejia, Jen T Broeder, Takoda Vargas, Eva Garay, Jessica Black, Preslee Cash, Cathy Wegner, Kimberly Rice, Jordan (jordancashmoney), Austin W. Martel, Sabrina M Palmer, Kelley Hooley, Alex West Learning Tree, Shirley Izaguirre, Cecilia Nahimana, Anna Graff, Lina Anayelih, Brenda J. Chavez, Ontaya Kingston, Jodee Fisher, Lilipeti Manatau, Beca Perez, Carla Vasquez, Lori Birrell, Isabel Calderon, Baylee Sciarini, Carle Taylor, Jennafer

Martin, Bianca M Whiten, Katrina Fesolai, Eric Partner, Janell Meaningful Mindz, Ilan (msheikh), Morgan Smith, Deisy Ortega, Christina, Luke Redman, Kim Melville, Lindy Baldwin, Kecia Vigil, W J Gubler, Lily Snyder-Fegley, Ken Miller

Agenda Item	Discussion	Recommendations/Actions
Welcome	A. Joyce Hasting welcomed the Committee and called for attendance. B. Committee Membership - Vacant Positions C. Approval of 7/08/2026, Meeting Minutes	Joyce Hasting called for a motion to approve the 7/08/2026 minutes. Katie Ricord motioned. Rhonda Dossett seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting minutes were approved.

**Market Rate Study
Feedback**

Market Rate Study Feedback - Dr. Catherine Ruetschlin

To view these study go to pages 4-8 in the [PowerPoint](#)

- A. Dr. Catherine Ruetschlin introduced the Market Rate Study, noting that it is a federal requirement of the Child Care Development Fund block grant system that the Office of Child Care must complete every three years.
 - a. The study analyzes the market prices of available childcare across Utah based on child age, provider type, and geography.
 - b. The study also evaluates provider costs to determine if there is a gap between the cost of supplying care and the prices providers can charge, which could threaten overall childcare stability in the state.
 - c. With the next study due in May 2027, data collection will begin over the winter, and the full report will be prepared for the committee's review next spring.
- B. Proposed updates to the data collection process for enrollment and vacancy rates were presented, emphasizing that accurate classroom composition data is essential for properly scaling market quintiles and understanding the true cost of care.
 - a. To improve data accuracy, it was proposed that the new survey shift from a simple headcount to a Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) model.
 - b. Under this proposed model, providers would report their enrollment, vacancies, and desired operating capacity by counting full-time children.
 - c. The survey will include built-in instructions and examples to guide providers in summing these FTE totals for both specific age groups and their overall facility capacity.
- C. The proposed timeline and development process for the Market Rate Study were outlined, emphasizing stakeholder input to ensure data accuracy for subsidy rate setting. A feedback period will take place over the next couple of months to refine the data collection process.
 - a. To reduce administrative burden, the required survey will be integrated into the existing Care About Childcare system and will run from January through March 2027. It will collect targeted data on enrollment, vacancies, market prices, accepted subsidies, and registration fees.
 - b. Final findings will be reported in quantile percentage thresholds—categorized by

child age, geography, and provider type—with the full report presented to the committee in May 2027.

- c. The study's cost of care calculations will explicitly factor in fixed operational realities, acknowledging that overhead costs (such as transportation and staffing for vacant slots) remain constant regardless of actual attendance.
- D. The methodology for the report's Narrow Cost Analysis was detailed, explaining how the study evaluates whether market prices cover standard operational expenses like labor, rent, materials, and insurance. It was noted that market rates rarely cover the true cost of care, particularly when providers invest in higher quality practices, such as reduced group sizes. To accurately capture the financial investments required to achieve these specific quality ratings, the analysis will be closely aligned with the updated Child Care Quality System (CCQS) framework.
- E. Labor represents approximately 75% of operational expenses. The cost estimation model will utilize Utah-specific Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data since a recent provider wage survey is unavailable.. This data will be disaggregated geographically and track median wages across three distinct categories: facility administrators, childcare workers, and preschool teachers. With current BLS data indicating rising wages in these sectors, the modeled cost of care for the upcoming study is expected to reflect corresponding increases.

Discussion

- A. Joyce Hasting asked if Dr. Ruetschlin would return in May 2027 to present the study's final findings and walk the committee through the complete report.
 - a. Dr. Ruetschlin confirmed attendance at the mid-May Advisory Committee meeting, noting that the committee will have the opportunity to review results and conduct a detailed discussion prior to the public release on May 31, 2027.
- B. Kristen Schulz requested that the upcoming report include more granular geospatial data, suggesting breakdowns by specific counties or the top ten cities rather than broad statewide or urban/rural divisions.
 - a. Dr. Ruetschlin agreed this was valuable for densely populated regions, but noted that

county-level reporting in small rural counties with only one or two providers raises privacy concerns regarding specific facility rates. However, Dr. Ruetschlin confirmed that county-level affordability metrics (comparing median price of care to median household income) will be reproduced for the new report.

- C. Lewis B suggested in the online chat that tracking available versus filled hours per week might yield more accurate data than the proposed binary full-time/part-time Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) model.
- a. Ann Stockham Mejia, OCC Subsidy Program Manager, explained that the 23-hour threshold for full-time care was specifically selected to align with state subsidy payment tiers (Tiers 3 and 4), ensuring survey data directly informs future subsidy rate setting.
 - b. Dr. Ruetschlin supported Ann Stockham Mejia's explanation, adding that tracking hourly vacancies creates practical complexity and conflicts with the study's per-child calculation model.
 - c. Addressing online chat inquiries from Janie McBee and Aubrey Lott regarding whether FTE counts should reflect actual daily attendance or paid/enrolled slots, Dr. Ruetschlin agreed to update survey language from "attends" to "enrolled."
- D. In response to online chat questions from Christina Robles, Monica Gailey, and Missy Sparks regarding school-age care on non-student days, Dr. Ruetschlin introduced survey updates that separate market rates for children ages six and older into summer (June–August) and school-year (September–May) categories.
- a. Dr. Ruetschlin explained that the school-year rate will ask providers for an average rate that inherently accounts for before/after-school care, early release days, and full-day school breaks.
 - b. Missy Sparks asked for the rationale behind separating seasonal rates given constant

provider overhead. Dr. Ruetschlin explained that disaggregating summer camps from school-year care allows the study to evaluate market price variances and set subsidy rates accurately.

- c. Heather Thomas noted that the blended school-year rate will be discussed further during the Director's Update, confirming that the seasonal split applies strictly to market rate reporting rather than enrollment counts.

E. Addressing chat comments from Lewis B and Jody Zabriskie regarding school-age schedule variations, Dr. Ruetschlin clarified that school-age children enrolled for 23 or more weekly hours qualify as full-time enrollees.

- a. Missy Sparks suggested categorizing all school-age enrollees as full-time to reduce reporting burden on providers, as operational costs remain static.
- b. Dr. Ruetschlin explained that tracking part-time slots remains essential because partial schedules leave open capacity for additional enrollees, clarifying that this distinction applies to enrollment counts rather than market rate calculations. Dr. Ruetschlin will look at adjusting language for school-age children to ensure enrollment, vacancies, and desired operating capacity are accurate when full-time care cannot be provided during the school year due to school hours.
- c. Heather Thomas confirmed that clear guidance will be provided prior to the January–March 2027 survey window.

F. Kristy DeGraaf shared in the online chat that current rates would need to increase two to three times to maintain program improvements and pay living wages. Additionally, it was noted that while opening part-time slots is often necessary to sustain operations, doing so significantly increases the administrative burden for Family Child Care (FCC) providers. Because providers are typically uncompensated for this extra administrative time,

the shift to part-time care creates further financial and operational complexity.

- G. In the online chat Dacie Derbidge pointed out that many school-age programs open at 5:30 a.m., resulting in nearly 30 hours of care per week, making the proposed 2.3-hour daily attendance assumption inaccurate.
- H. An online comment from Astrid Arias noted that real-world wages paid to childcare employees are currently higher than the presented figures in order to remain competitive with entry-level positions in other industries, such as fast food. Given the immense responsibility placed on childcare workers, the comment expressed hope that the final cost model will accurately reflect the realistic wages required to attract and retain qualified staff.
- I. Dr. Ruetschlin addressed online comments from Christina Robles, Monica Gailey, Janie McBee, and Aubrey Lott, emphasizing that market rates reflect prices charged, whereas the Narrow Cost Analysis models true operational costs.
 - a. Dr. Ruetschlin confirmed for Christina Robles that the cost model factors in fixed overhead (rent, utilities, insurance, administration, and staffing) for full operating hours regardless of classroom ratio utilization, comparing costs against the 75th percentile of market rates rather than subsidy reimbursement rates.
 - b. In response to Astrid Arias, Dr. Ruetschlin noted that Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) wage figures include employer payroll taxes, unemployment insurance, Social Security, and Mountain West service sector benefit estimates.
- J. An online chat from Cecilia Nahimana asked how the study and rate structures accommodate school-aged children needing care during evening hours for parents working non-traditional shifts, such as 2:00 p.m.–10:30 p.m. or 3:00 p.m.–11:00 p.m.
- K. In-person attendee Ken Miller asked whether the presented wage figures included temporary COVID-19 relief funds and if mean (average) wages were evaluated against median figures.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Dr. Ruetschlin responded that 2025 BLS data excludes previous COVID-19 relief enhancements. A real-time review indicated that mean hourly wages are slightly higher than medians (\$0.22 higher for childcare workers; ~\$1.00 higher for preschool teachers), acknowledging that utilizing mean wages could better reflect true operational costs. b. Dr. Ruetschlin added that geographic labor dynamics explain why individual providers pay above \$15.21 per hour, as rural providers must offer higher wages to attract staff from smaller local labor pools. L. An online chat comment from Azteca Druce Valerio-Bedolla expressed concern that if subsidy reimbursements do not keep pace with rising provider costs, families will lose access to care, forcing parents to leave the workforce. M. An online chat comment from Monica Gailey asked how the study defines a preschool teacher, and questioned how the Office of Child Care accounts for the economic impact of unaffordable childcare on the workforce when setting subsidy rates. 	
Open and Public Meetings Act Training	<p><u>Utah Open & Public Meetings Act (OPMA)-Su Chon</u> To view these slides go to pages 10-27 in the PowerPoint Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. No discussion 	
OCC Director's Update	<p><u>Conflict of Interest Forms - Heather Thomas</u> To view these slides go to page 28 in the PowerPoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Heather Thomas provided an update regarding the annual Conflict of Interest (COI) forms, noting that the administrative assistant will email the documents to all committee members. Members were instructed to review for any updates that may be needed. <p><u>Discussion</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. No discussion <p><u>Review of CCDF Allocation and Subsidy Changes - Heather Thomas</u> To view these slides go to pages 29-32 in the PowerPoint</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Heather Thomas gave a high-level overview of Utah's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) 	<p>A formal motion was introduced by Kristen Schulz proposing that the Office of Child Care formally request a minimum of \$25 million in state funds for the upcoming fiscal year to maintain the child care subsidy qualifying income limit at 85% of the State Median Income and avoid proposed reductions. The motion was seconded by Missy Sparks. Crystal Knippers, Bree Murphy, and Joyce Hasting abstained from the vote. The motion passed with nine confirmed votes in favor.</p> <p>Missy Sparks requested that the Office of Child Care (OCC) formally submit an inquiry to the Federal Office of Child Care to determine if any CCDF relief, waivers, or</p>

allocation to contextualize the five main funding streams. It was noted that Utah is currently maximizing its available federal matching funds for Fiscal Year 2026. Regarding the discretionary funding formula, it was clarified that Utah's recent reduction in funding was primarily caused by a decrease in state participation in the federal free and reduced lunch program relative to other states, whereas state trends for per capita income and children under five remained relatively consistent with national averages.

- B. A historical review of the CCDF funding allocation highlighted a \$22 million decrease from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2024 to FFY2025, resulting from formula data updates following a COVID-19 data freeze.
- a. Notification of this funding decrease was not received until the end of FFY 2025, necessitating the use of reserve funds to cover prior expenditures. Furthermore, despite a recent overall federal increase to the CCDF budget in FFY 2026, Utah's official allocation for the current fiscal year remained flat, sustaining the \$22 million deficit.
 - b. To manage this ongoing shortfall, budget cuts were implemented across all programs. The severe impact these cuts have on families, providers, and local business operations was acknowledged, alongside a warning that additional budget adjustments may be required in the coming years.
 - c. Despite the reductions, direct Child Care Assistance remains the agency's largest priority. However, it was noted that while Utah's total annual funding allocation has increased approximately 28% since 2019, spending on direct childcare assistance has surged by over 108%—consuming roughly 93% of the annual allocation last year.
 - d. Given federal mandates requiring at least 70% of funds be spent on direct assistance and 12% on quality initiatives, combined with necessary administrative and licensing costs, the current trajectory of assistance spending is financially unsustainable without supplemental, non-guaranteed reserve funding.
- C. A review of projected child care subsidy budget impacts outlined an estimated average annual savings of \$15.6 million over the next three fiscal years (through FY 2029).

operational flexibilities are available to help Utah preserve services during the current budget shortfall.

- a. To manage this ongoing shortfall, several proposed program modifications required to generate savings were reviewed, including adjustments to income eligibility limits, school-age seasonal rates, part-time subsidy rates, job search childcare provisions, and registration fees.
- D. Additional context was provided regarding the timeline and rationale for the ongoing subsidy policy changes. It was noted that the recent reduction of job search childcare to a three-month maximum ensures alignment with federal regulations. Regarding the October 1st income limit revisions, it was explained that eligibility had been temporarily raised to 85% of the State Median Income (SMI) for all applicants during the COVID-19 pandemic; reducing these initial and review thresholds is necessary to return the program to sustainable, pre-pandemic operational levels. Finally, it was emphasized that both the revised income limits and the part-time rate adjustments are phased changes, meaning they will be rolled out gradually during each family's next scheduled annual review or case change rather than impacting all active participants immediately on October 1st.

Discussion

- A. Referring back to the Child Care Subsidy Budget Impacts presentation, Missy Sparks asked for clarification on the exact financial value of the 15.5% budget reduction attributed to school-age summer and school-year rates, specifically inquiring how much money is being saved by requiring providers to differentiate between in-school and out-of-school care.
 - a. Heather Thomas responded that the figure represents approximately 15.5% of the projected \$15.6 million average annual decrease, spread out over the next three fiscal years.
 - b. It was further clarified that providing a static dollar amount is difficult because the changes are interconnected and the projected savings include anticipated application growth and future subsidy rate adjustments.
- B. Jody Zabriskie asked how families should accurately report their needed versus attended hours on annual review paperwork for school-age care, noting that combined before- and after-school care frequently exceeds the 23-hour threshold.

- a. Heather Thomas responded that while school-year rates will be covered in greater detail later in the presentation, families demonstrating a documented need for more than 22.9 hours of care outside the standard school day can qualify for an exception to receive a higher maximum rate.
- C. Jody Zabriskie also reported a recent increase in cases where state eligibility specialists are allegedly advising families not to pay any out-of-pocket fees or copays to providers, asking if this reflects an official guidance update.
 - a. Camie Galt clarified that this advice is entirely incorrect, as families remain responsible for their applicable copays and out-of-pocket expenses.
 - b. Camie Galt requested that providers forward specific case examples so the agency can review each scenario and address any necessary internal staff training.
- D. Missy Sparks asked what the State Median Income (SMI) eligibility percentages were prior to the temporary COVID-19 increase to 85%, expressing concern that the newly proposed 50% entry and 65% review thresholds drop eligibility below those pre-pandemic levels. It was noted that this reduction could disqualify previously eligible families despite recent increases in the cost of living and a stagnant \$7.25 minimum wage.
 - a. Heather Thomas confirmed that historical, pre-pandemic eligibility levels were set at 56% of the SMI for initial entry and 70% for the exit threshold.
 - b. Addressing the cost of living concerns, Heather Thomas clarified that while the proposed percentage thresholds are lower, the actual dollar value of the State Median Income increases annually to account for rising living costs and overall wage growth.
 - c. It was further noted that the state's income eligibility brackets are adjusted every year to accurately reflect these updated SMI dollar figures.
- E. An online chat discussion involving Astrid Arias, Dacie Derbidge, Jefferson Curtis, Sharon Timothy Miller, Kristy DeGraaf, and Monica Gailey explored whether low participation in the free and reduced-price school lunch program creates an inaccurate picture of Utah's financial need, potentially resulting in reduced federal childcare

funding allocations. The participants noted that families frequently decline to participate due to complicated application processes, dissatisfaction with food quality, or a reluctance to utilize public assistance. Monica Gailey further suggested that funding reporting metrics should account for diverse educational choices, as non-participation in public school lunch programs does not equate to a lack of financial need for childcare.

- F. An online comment from Jefferson Curtis requested clarification on why specific numerical data referenced by the presenter was not visible on the presentation slides.
- G. An online chat discussion involving Allison Mitton, Jessica K, and Tenille Taggart questioned the financial utility of conducting a new market rate survey during a budget deficit. The participants argued that the childcare gap is already known and suggested redirecting the survey funds directly into the subsidy rate fund to support existing program levels rather than financing further studies.
- H. Regarding the proposed income eligibility reductions, online chat comments from Janie McBee, Monica Gailey, and Jefferson Curtis expressed severe concern over the strict thresholds. Janie McBee stated that Utah will become the only state with an income exit limit lower than 85%. Monica Gailey emphasized that a reduction to 65% is excessively low given the high cost of care, arguing that families qualifying for low-income housing (which utilizes an 85% limit) should inherently qualify for childcare assistance. Adding to this, Jefferson Curtis stated that these proposed reductions fail to reflect the economic realities of working-class families, noting thresholds were too low even before these cuts. Monica Gailey concluded that lowering the entry and exit limits to 50% and 65% will ultimately cost the state more money by forcing disqualified families onto other public assistance programs.
- I. An online comment from Jefferson Curtis criticized the state legislature and the Governor for not convening an emergency legislative session to allocate state surplus funds to address the childcare funding deficit.
- J. Online comments from Dacie Derbidge and Sadie Larsen warned that implementing subsidy cuts will negatively impact the state budget. Sadie Larsen noted that losing subsidized childcare at the next review will force a departure from the workforce, while Dacie Derbidge predicted that a mass loss of access will force many parents to quit their jobs and

increasingly rely on other public assistance programs.

- K. An online comment from Dacie Derbidge contrasted the state's childcare budget cuts with recent messaging from the Utah One Summit regarding kindergarten readiness, arguing that investing in early childhood education ultimately saves state funds in the long term.
- L. Online chat comments from Azteca Druce Valerio-Bedolla and Melanie Call addressed the gap between subsidy payments and actual tuition costs. Melanie Call noted the state already acknowledges subsidies may not cover full provider charges, leaving parents responsible for the difference. Azteca Druce Valerio-Bedolla asked if data exists showing providers proportionally reduce tuition for part-time attendance, questioning who covers the financial difference if subsidy payments decrease but slot prices remain static. Both questioned whether current funding accurately targets workforce impact and asked if projections exist on how many families might leave the workforce due to these out-of-pocket costs.
- M. An online chat comment from Jefferson Curtis expressed frustration over the proposed cuts to Job Search Child Care, noting a past personal denial of this specific benefit following a layoff.
- N. An online chat comment from Janie McBee requested that the subsidy tiers table be made easily accessible to parents and providers rather than remaining hidden within the eligibility policy document.

School-Year and Summer Rates for School-Age Children - Heather Thomas

To view these slides go to pages 33-40 in the [PowerPoint](#)

- A. Proposed adjustments to school-year and summer rates for school-aged children were reviewed, noting that these updates were developed in response to feedback from the previous meeting.
 - a. To provide comparative context, policy examples from several other states were reviewed, demonstrating a standard national practice of establishing distinct policies and rates for school-year care (typically part-time or before-and-after school) versus summer care (typically full-time). While specific payment models vary, federal regulations prohibit utilizing subsidy funds for services provided during the regular school day.

B. A proposal is introduced to automate the transition between school-year and summer maximum subsidy rates to alleviate the administrative burden on families reporting seasonal schedule changes. For the in-school period spanning September through May, the maximum subsidy rate will be limited to a blended part-time rate. This blended rate inherently accounts for standard part-time care days, as well as full-time care needs during holidays or school breaks, without requiring manual reporting.

a. Exceptions to this school-year maximum may be approved with appropriate documentation for non-traditional work hours or other scenarios requiring a higher need for care. Furthermore, during the out-of-school summer period from June through August, the maximum subsidy rate will automatically adjust to the full-time rate to accommodate the increased need for full-day care.

C. The methodology behind the proposed blended school-year rate calculation was detailed, explaining how the weekly average of required care hours was estimated for the September through May period. It was noted that while many school calendars extend into August and June, those transitional months will be categorized under the full-time summer rate to ensure adequate coverage.

a. The calculation accounts for an average of 195 weekdays, estimating 165 part-time care days (requiring roughly 2.3 hours of care per day, based on an eight-hour workday minus school hours) and 30 full-time care days for holidays and breaks. This formula yields an estimated average of 15.9 hours of care needed per week. Furthermore, it was clarified that subsidized care hours are calculated strictly based on authorized work time and do not factor in commute times.

Discussion

A. Katie Ricord requested data regarding the specific number of children currently receiving services who will be negatively impacted by the proposed rate and eligibility changes.

a. Heather Thomas provided a percentage breakdown of the anticipated impact on

children currently enrolled in the Child Care Assistance Program, reporting that 10% of children will lose eligibility entirely due to the proposed income limit reductions. Additionally, 23% of children will be impacted solely by the school-year rate changes, 23% will be impacted solely by the part-time rate changes, and 7% will be impacted by both policies. The remaining 37% of enrolled children—primarily those aged zero to five requiring full-time care with household incomes at or below 65% of the State Median Income—will not be affected by the eligibility or rate changes.

- B. Kristen Schulz reiterated a position presented during the previous year, emphasizing that the Advisory Committee should actively fulfill its policy role by recommending formal budget requests. It was stated that the committee should formally move to have the Office of Child Care request state funding rather than accepting federal shortfalls that force income eligibility limits below 85% of the State Median Income.
- a. Heather Thomas noted that committee members who are State employees may need to abstain from voting.
 - b. Heather Thomas confirmed that recommendations from the Advisory Committee can be conveyed to the Commissioner's Office, while noting that state leadership is aware of the funding reduction and subsidy program cuts.
 - c. Kristen Schulz clarified that the motion calls on the Office of Child Care to officially submit this budget request through formal state channels, emphasizing that the agency is tasked with overseeing statewide child care needs beyond the administration of federal funds.
 - d. Further discussion between Katie Ricord and Kristen Schulz addressed external advocacy strategies, noting that individual committee members and stakeholders can separately contact state representatives and senators to advocate for child care funding outside of formal board proceedings.
- C. Missy Sparks expressed concern regarding the projection that 23% of children would be impacted by the school-year rate change, stating that the real-world consequences will be significantly more severe. It was emphasized that families facing new

or increased out-of-pocket expenses—such as an additional \$260 monthly cost—will be unable to absorb the difference, particularly because providers cannot afford to waive required copays or fees.

- D. Furthermore, she warned that these cost increases will force families to withdraw from quality programs and resort to unsafe, non-quality care alternatives. This outcome risks creating a new surge of latchkey children across the state, ultimately defeating the primary objective of state child care assistance to ensure safe, quality care for children in need.
- E. Online chat comments from Astrid Arias, Dacie Derbidge, Mary Kavanaugh, and Janie McBee questioned the accuracy of the 2.3-hour daily care assumption used in the blended school-age rate calculation. Multiple providers noted that operating hours frequently span from 5:30 or 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., resulting in school-aged children requiring up to six hours of care per regular school day, in addition to extra hours needed for early release days or four-day school weeks, as noted by Rosemary and Kristy DeGraaf for specific districts. Astrid Arias formally requested that the department revise this 2.3-hour assumption using actual provider attendance records before implementation.
- F. Expanding on the blended rate challenges, online chat comments from Denise, Jefferson Curtis, and Kristy DeGraaf noted that transitioning to hourly billing to offset funding gaps is administratively unfeasible and contrary to standard industry practice, which relies heavily on daily or weekly flat rates.
- G. Regarding the financial viability of providers, online chat comments from Astrid Arias, Monica Gailey, Cindi Buckley, and Denise expressed concern that the nearly 40% school-year rate reduction will force widespread facility closures. Allison Mitton pointed out that fixed operational costs, such as rent and insurance, do not decrease while children are attending school. Tami Thomas added that reduced school-age funding will unavoidably lead to staff layoffs. Highlighting these risks, Braxton Lethco shared an online case study from Indiana, noting that a similar 35% reduction in school-age subsidy reimbursement led to over 300 program closures within a few months.
- H. Online chat comments from Alexis G, Sadie Larsen, Aspyynn M, Alyssa Sallee, Anna Graff, and Brielle Littleford emphasized that the proposed cuts will

	<p>destabilize working families, particularly single parents. These commenters noted that losing access to affordable childcare will force parents to leave the workforce and rely heavily on other public assistance programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Safety concerns were raised in online chat comments by Naysla, Sadie Larsen, Deborah Kingston, and Kristy DeGraaf, warning that unaffordable care will result in children being left home alone, walking long distances unaccompanied, or being placed in unsafe, unlicensed care environments. Additionally, Valerie Barton and Kristy DeGraaf noted that mass provider closures will inadvertently drive up tuition costs and reduce availability for all families across the state, regardless of subsidy participation. J. Several online chat comments proposed alternative funding strategies to avoid the subsidy cuts entirely. Melanie Call and Dacie Derbidge suggested reallocating the estimated \$40 million budget from the Waterford UPSTART pre-K program. Brittany Greenwood suggested reallocating funds currently utilized for administering the Child Care Quality System, though Kristy DeGraaf offered a counterpoint that participating in quality programs is currently a vital way for providers to offset operational costs without burdening parents. Jennafer Martin suggested delaying other state and municipal projects to bridge the childcare funding gap, while Allison Mitton requested the funding of a previously passed legislative policy that would provide subsidies directly to childcare employees. 	
Partner Highlight OCC Updates Agency Updates	<p>The committee approved to table these sections of the agenda due to time constraints.</p>	<p>Kristen Schulz moved to amend the meeting agenda due to time constraints, proposing to table Sections 5, 6, and 7 and defer them to the next scheduled meeting. Following a second, the committee voted unanimously in favor, officially approving the motion to alter the agenda.</p>

**Other Business &
Public Comment**

No other business

A.

Discussion

A. No Discussion

Public Comment

- A. Speaking directly to the committee in the meeting room, attendee Christina Robles noted the virtual presence of state legislators and reiterated the need for a formal gap funding request from the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) to the Governor's office and the legislature. It was stated that consultation with a legislative fiscal analyst identified \$11 million in unspent funds that could legally be reallocated to bridge the child care funding deficit through May, providing time to secure long-term solutions.
- a. In response, Heather Thomas clarified that DWS is already utilizing unspent Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds for eligible families, having previously secured legislative approval for this reallocation. While Christina Robles stressed the urgency of requesting a special legislative session prior to October, Heather Thomas confirmed that the DWS Commissioner's office and the Governor's office have both been formally notified of the current budget deficit. It was further noted that external organizations also possess the ability to submit formal funding requests to state leadership.
- B. Kristy DeGraaf spoke to the committee and warned that the proposed changes will force providers to significantly alter business operations just to remain open, increasing administrative burdens and negatively impacting provider mental health and program sustainability. Strong support was voiced for a formal additional funding request to avoid exacerbating an already fragile child care system.
- C. Jody Zabriskie expressed concern regarding the prioritization of funding for high-quality child care initiatives while foundational access remains underfunded. It was argued that heavily funding "back-end" quality programs is counterproductive if families cannot afford the basic child care necessary to enter the workforce. A formal request was made to record the position that available funding should first ensure families have access to care and employment before being allocated to high-quality programs.

- D. Speaking virtually, Janie McBee questioned whether the proposed school-year rate reductions would apply across all income tiers. This change would affect those who qualify for 23 or more hours of child care per week. Janie McBee emphasized that with 40% of enrolled families at the federal poverty level and school-aged children comprising 38% of the total caseload, low-income families with multiple children could face out-of-pocket costs amounting to 20% of their annual income. It was further stated that providers cannot absorb the resulting \$2,358 annual per-child deficit, warning that the system will collapse if alternative funding is not identified.
- a. Elaborating on operational impacts, Missy Sparks noted that fixed overhead and staffing expenses remain constant regardless of whether children are physically in school, particularly due to unscheduled school closures, early release days, and varying district calendars. Consequently, providers may be forced to raise rates on non-school-age children to keep facilities operational.
- E. Missy Sparks inquired whether the Office of Child Care (OCC) or the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) had formally requested federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) relief or operational waivers to preserve services during the \$22 million funding shortfall.
- a. Heather Thomas noted that prior discussions with federal partners had not yielded waiver options, it was agreed to record a formal action item for the OCC to submit an official inquiry to the Federal Office of Child Care regarding available flexibilities and relief options.
- F. Speaking virtually, Dacie Derbidge stated that the proposed school-age rate cap fails to cover providers opening as early as 5:30 a.m. or accommodate upcoming regional shifts, such as Iron County's move to a four-day school week. She warns that subsidy reductions will harm the workforce and increase reliance on programs like food stamps; it was argued that the state should increase early childhood investments to support kindergarten readiness rather than reduce them.
- G. Speaking virtually, Naysla Anderson provided a cost breakdown of operating a before- and after-school program, noting that the proposed rate equates to roughly \$19 per day per child. It was emphasized that this amount must cover breakfast, snacks,

transportation gas, driver wages, and high liability insurance premiums required to transport children. Consequently, a request was made for the state to provide a budget spreadsheet demonstrating how providers can mathematically operate a program under these figures.

- H. Speaking in person, Monica Gailey (a multi-county center provider) expressed severe concern over the proposed school-year rate reductions, warning that the projected financial impacts will be devastating for both working families and program operations. Using an employee with five school-aged children as an example, it was emphasized that single and lower-income parents cannot absorb out-of-pocket increases of up to \$300 per child each month. Because providers have already raised tuition rates to the absolute limit that families can afford, neither parents nor centers possess the financial capacity to absorb these projected funding deficits.
- a. Continuing her comments, Monica Gailey drew crucial attention to the operational reality that school-age tuition revenue directly subsidizes the significantly higher costs of caring for infants and toddlers (ages zero to five). It was noted that provider overhead—including fixed facility expenses, year-round staffing, and specialized vehicle insurance, which costs over \$25,000 annually for her center alone—remains constant even while children are not physically in the classroom. Furthermore, Monica Gailey shared that enrolled school-age children overwhelmingly require full-week care rather than sporadic part-time hours, with only 5 out of 148 school-aged children in her program attending fewer than five days per week.
 - b. In her concluding remarks, Monica Gailey warned that these cuts will inevitably trigger mass program closures, staff layoffs, and unsustainable rate hikes for subsidized and middle-income families alike, making an urgent plea for the Office of Child Care to completely re-evaluate the school-age calculation.
 - i. In response, Heather Thomas clarified that the proposed changes will not take effect in October, as implementation has been delayed to allow for additional preparation.
 - ii. Melea Rogers added that this extended timeline offers a vital

window to pursue waivers and explore alternative funding solutions.

- I. Speaking virtually, Estela Mejia, with live translation provided in the meeting room by Christina Robles, expressed grave concern over the proposed policy changes, characterizing the potential outcomes as a catastrophic crisis for children, families, and providers alike.
 - a. In her comments, Estela Mejia emphasized that the loss of subsidies will force parents to reduce work hours, abandon educational pursuits, or rely on high-school-aged siblings to stay home and care for younger children, thereby compromising the educational future of an entire generation. From a business perspective, it was noted that losing subsidized families who cannot afford the financial difference will directly cause a loss of provider revenue, leading to staff layoffs and potential facility closures.
 - b. Furthermore, Estela Mejia highlighted the severe emotional and developmental impact on children. It was emphasized that childcare centers serve as safe, stable, and consistent environments for children, and displacing them from familiar routines and caregivers will induce significant stress and trauma, resulting in long-term mental health and academic consequences.
- J. Speaking in person, Dr. Micah Kingston raised concerns regarding the state's hours of service study, stating that its underlying assumptions do not accurately reflect the operational realities of child care centers. Dr. Micah Kingston explained that revenues generated from school-age care are essential to offset the inherent financial losses sustained by providing infant care.
 - a. Dr. Micah Kingston noted that serving multiple school districts requires maintaining physical capacity and flexible staffing, such as hiring substitute caregivers, to accommodate staggered school closures and varying district schedules. It was emphasized that these persistent operational demands appear omitted from the study, and eliminating this critical school-age revenue will threaten the financial survival of providers.
 - b. Dr. Micah Kingston expressed sincere appreciation to the committee and staff for their dedication, emphasizing that while

the situation directly impacts provider livelihoods, the feedback is offered with respect and mutual recognition of shared concern for children and families.

- K. Speaking in person, Christina Robles addressed the long-term path forward, noting that while the Office of Child Care operates within strict budget appropriations, both citizens and the Department of Workforce Services can request a Request for Appropriation (RFA) during the upcoming legislative session. Christina Robles stressed that while temporary gap funding will pause immediate policy implementations, an official RFA is necessary to secure sustainable, long-term state funding.
 - a. Christina Robles requested for the formal record that legislators step up to recognize early childhood education as a critical workforce issue. It was emphasized that child care is not an industry beneath the broader economy, but rather the foundational infrastructure that enables all other sectors to function safely and effectively.
- L. Speaking in person, Ken Miller addressed the operational and labor constraints associated with school-age care, emphasizing that standard rate formulas fail to capture provider staffing realities. Ken Miller explained that child care staff cannot be hired or retained on fragmented two-hour split shifts corresponding solely to before- and after-school hours, as employees require stable, full-time wages and will otherwise seek employment elsewhere.
 - a. Ken Miller noted that when school-aged children leave for the classroom during the day, center capacity drops, yet baseline overhead and staffing commitments remain fixed. It was urged that future rate calculations explicitly account for these labor dynamics and the need to maintain competitive, stable positions for the caregivers who directly service children.
- M. Online chat comments from Valerie Barton, Karina, Denise, and Astrid Arias urged the Office of Child Care to utilize the delayed implementation period to actively advocate for legislative funding rather than merely postponing inevitable rate cuts, emphasizing that childcare must be prioritized as essential economic infrastructure.

	<p><u>Discussion</u></p> <p>A. Committee Chair Joyce Hasting concluded the public comment period by thanking all participants for their input and perspective. Joyce Hasting acknowledged the deep emotions surrounding the discussion, emphasizing that the entire committee shares a unified commitment to prioritizing the well-being and needs of children.</p>	
Adjournment	<p><u>Upcoming Meeting:</u></p> <p>Wednesday, November 4, 2026 ~ 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm</p>	<p>Joyce Hasting called for a motion to adjourn. Holly Kingston motioned. Kelly Noorda seconded. The motion was carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned.</p>